

## POLITICS

Politics moves us into the realm of the *polis*, what the ancient Greeks called the city state, their bold and original effort to govern humanly and democratically in a human community. Much of the genius of ancient Greek culture derives from its embedding in this dynamic but stable political structure. Balances of conflict and leadership were effectively sustained throughout the fifth century B.C., at which point oligarchic tendencies and overt intra polis wars colluded to erode the fine-tuned political structure of the fifth century polis. But the Athenian achievement had already left an enduring mark on world political history.

The conflict between freedom and oppression has persisted as a secondary theme of western politics to our day. At the present, in one of the most powerful nation states in the world, forces of oppression, fearful of surrendering their hegemony, have been in covert conflict with a residuum of classical democracy, in a show of power which threatens the ancient and precarious balance of forces on which the initial polis depended. It is not the first time that the balance in question has been threatened—for even in recent centuries autocracy has been known totally to replace democracy. In the present instance the rule of law finds itself threatened, however, which removes an essential support from the democratic balance.